



Winter Weather Advisory

Climate change issue hits home

By [John Myers](#) on May 30, 2008 at 12:00 a.m.

Broad-brush efforts to help curb global climate change now being debated in Washington could make the problem worse, a national expert on the subject said Thursday in Duluth.

Tom Mullikin, author of "Global Solutions: Demanding Total Accountability for Climate Change" said many solutions proposed through U.S. regulations could push carbon-emitting industry out of the country and into nations with little or no greenhouse gas regulation.

If U.S. regulations push a manufacturer to China, the same manufacturing output could produce 150 percent to 500 percent more greenhouse gas emissions, Mullikin said.

"If you reduce emissions locally but increase them globally, that's not leadership. That's making the problem worse," Mullikin said.

Mullikin used Minnesota Steel, the steel manufacturer proposed for the Iron Range, as an example. The company's estimated carbon dioxide emissions are about 5 million metric tons per year. If the company was required to reduce that footprint by 20 percent, as proposed in some legislation, the company would somehow have to reduce emissions by 1 million tons or pay to buy credits for those emissions.

Carbon emissions currently are trading for about \$40 per ton on the European Union market.

"That would cost [Minnesota Steel] \$40 million annually. If that happens, they aren't coming here," Mullikin said. "That steel manufacturing and those jobs will go to China or

somewhere else."

Mullikin said Minnesota's goal of reducing carbon emissions 15 percent by 2015, now state law, is noble, but that the state should focus on meeting those goals from sectors of the economy that can't be easily displaced overseas -- including energy, transportation and agriculture.

Every option should be on the table, Mullikin noted. For example, 108 Minnesota landfills are emitting methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, but fewer than 30 are capturing that methane for energy. Requiring methane reduction from landfills won't cause an increase elsewhere "because those landfills aren't going to move to China," he quipped.

Mullikin panned the Lieberman-Warner climate change bill set for Senate debate next week in Washington, saying proposed cap and trade schemes will make some companies and investment firms wealthy but do little to solve the global crisis of climate change. He noted the European Union cap and trade system likely has done nothing to stop a global increase in carbon emissions and may have made things worse.

"I prefer a cap and reduce policy... applied surgically where you can do the most good and cause the least harm," Mullikin said, adding that in the two years it will take for the U.S. government to enact a carbon reductions plan, China's carbon emissions increase will more than offset U.S. emissions decline. "So the problem gets worse, not better."

Mullikin -- who has traveled worldwide to see first-hand the effects of global warming, which he describes as "astounding" -- said that the debate over human contribution to changing climate should be put behind U.S. policymakers. While human-caused carbon, nitrous oxide, methane and fluorines are a small percentage of overall greenhouse gases, Mullikin said the preponderance of science shows human-caused gasses are contributing to global climate change and must be addressed.

Mullikin's presentation in Duluth was sponsored by the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce along with Flint Hills oil refinery in the Twin Cities, the Iron Mining Association of Minnesota and Minnesota Forest Industries.

Mullikin, a North Carolina attorney, has been a campaign manager to senior members of Congress, including Fritz Hollings and John Spratt, and U.S. presidential candidates Al

Gore and John McCain.

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